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# CARELESS CORNLY

*a cautionary tale*

Illustrated by

Rebecca Yeretian-Santana, ATR

## FOREWORD

The novel coronavirus pandemic is a scary and confusing time for everyone, and talking to kids about it can be challenging. I'm thrilled that Children's Hospital Los Angeles is helping children deal with these big issues in language they can understand. Use it as a tool to explain, empower, and start a conversation with the children in your life.

And remember, we're all in this together.

—Natalie Portman

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Corny Coronavirus has been traveling the world. Everyone is staying home and trying to avoid him. Well, almost everyone. Some people need to work, like people in hospitals, cleaners, police, firefighters, people who make and sell our food, and helpers who support the people staying at home. All these people are doing everything they can to stay safe for their families.

Corny has a bunch of names:



Although the coronavirus is invisible, it can visit anyone, rich or poor, kids or grown-ups. Today Corny is visiting a kid down the street.



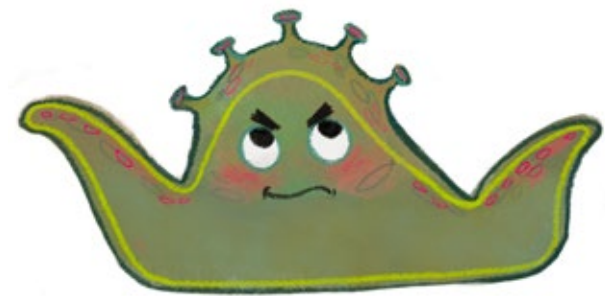
Excuse me.  
Who are you?



Where are my manners?  
I'm Cornelius P. Chartreuse-Corona the 19<sup>th</sup>.  
But my friends call me Corny for short.



**EEEEW!**



What? It's just some germs!  
People can't see them,  
but I'm covered in 'em.



I almost forgot.  
Time to  
log in for  
school!

**Yuck! School!**

Good morning, class. Today I wanted to show you a list of things we can do to fight the coronavirus, whether you're a kid or a grown-up.



I think she just said my name.

Shhh.  
Pay attention.

I know it might be a little scary right now, but there are things you can do to help.



Stay home.

Cough and sneeze into your elbow.

Stay six feet away from people you don't live with.

Clean things you touch a lot.

Wear a mask when needed.

Don't touch your face.

Wash your hands for 20 seconds.

Remember, even if we're in different places,  
we're all in this together.



Together  
forever!

Together for-**NEVER!**

And don't forget to  
keep your hands clean!

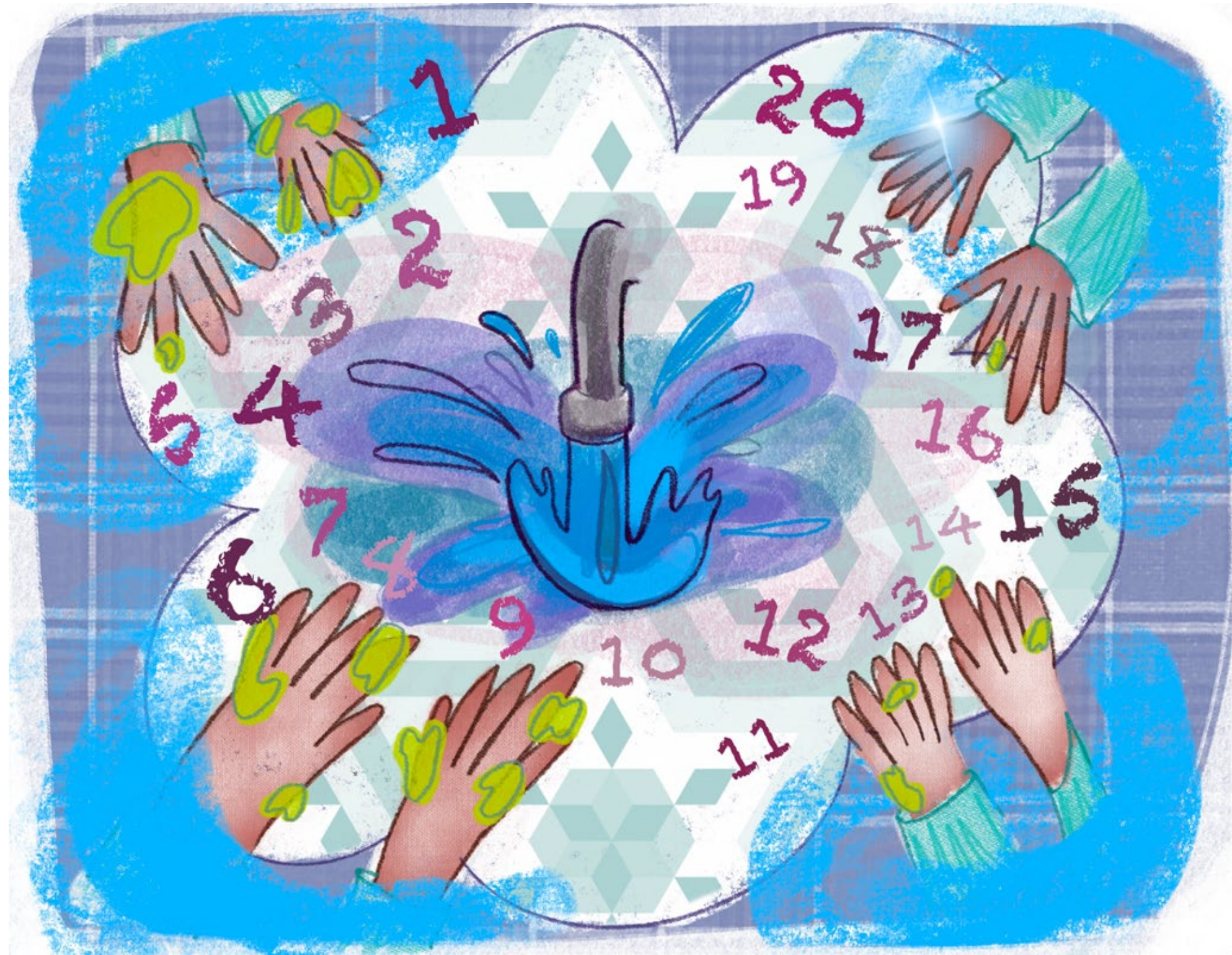
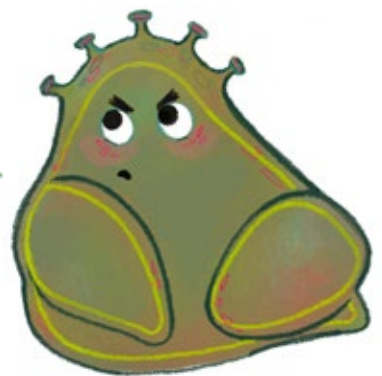




... 18, 19, 20!  
Okay! Done!

High five!

Oops, did I do that?





Whoa! Whoa! Back it up six feet, buddy.



My feet or  
your feet?

Hmm. How to  
measure six feet?



1-2-3-  
4-5-6



Ah...

Ahhh...

Ahhhh...

Ahhhhhhh...



**AACHOOO**

You were **SUPPOSED** to sneeze into your elbow. Good thing I built my six-foot slime shield!



This is not funny.



This is **SNOT** funny.



Just go AWAY!

Nah.



I've been cleaning all day and I'm exhausted.

And who likes the smell of these wipes?

Not me!

I've been trying to wash my hands, but it's really hard.

I want to go to the playground.

I have a booger and I want to pick my nose but I know I'm not supposed to.

I miss my friends.

I can't go outside. I'm sick of my toys.

I want to go back to school.

They tell me "Don't touch your face," but it's all I wanna' do.

And where is the ice cream? How can I be trapped in a house with no ice cream? Ice cream is essential. But we "can't go to the store."

Everything is just stinky and I really miss my Nana.

I've been hearing lots of stuff. I'm worried. Are you sick?



Oh sweetie, what's wrong?

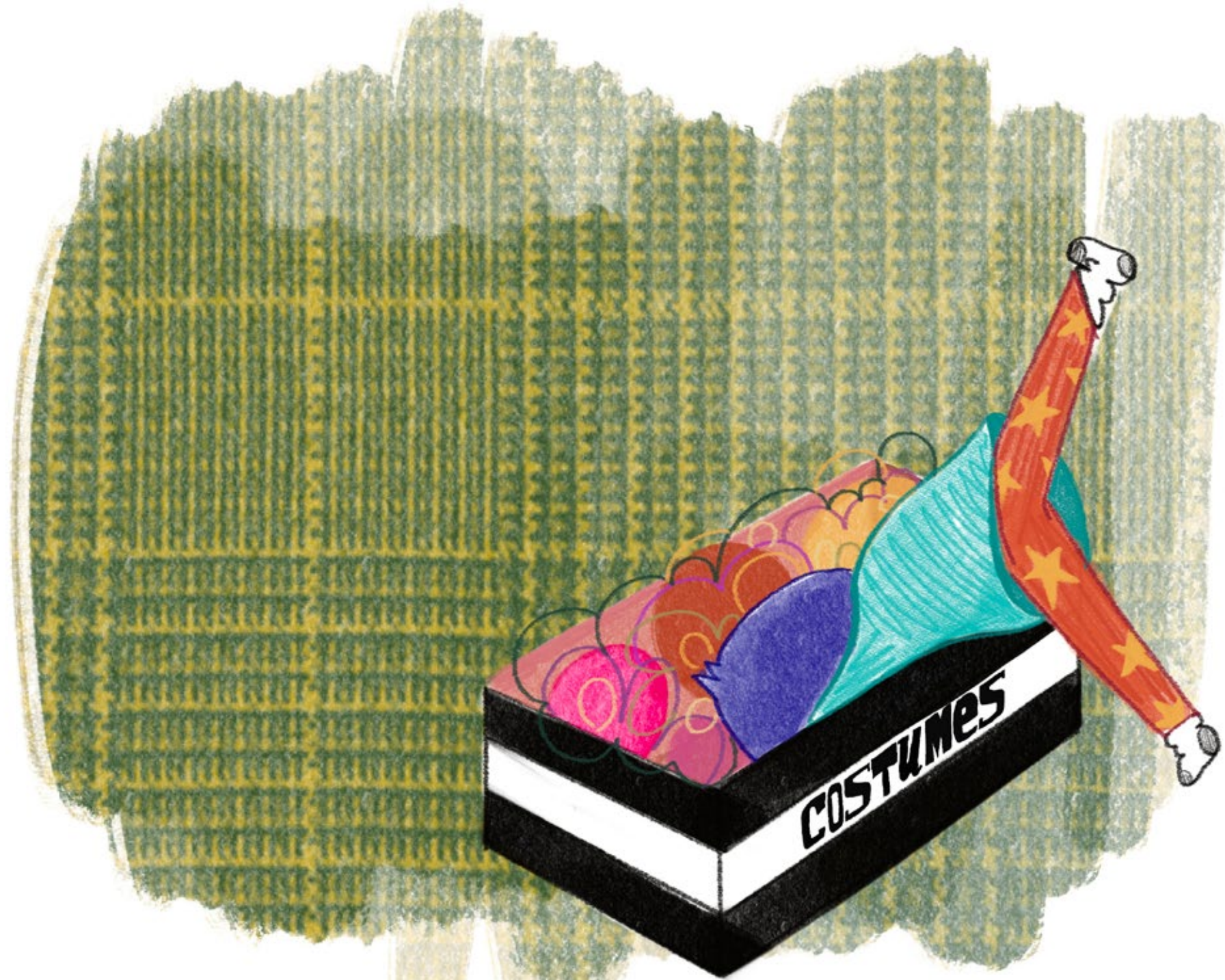
No sweetheart. I've been staying safe at home, like you.

OK. But what if we still get sick?

Most people will get better at home, but luckily, if they need to go to the hospital, there are doctors and nurses ready to help. And I'm prepared. I made my own mask in case I need to go outside.



Oh, wait! I have one too.



No, silly! Like this.  
That looks weird.



Weirder than your  
gorilla mask?

Right now  
everything  
seems weird,  
and scary too.

I think a lot of us are feeling scared. But you're really brave  
and it won't be this way forever. Nana's promise.

I wish I could give you a big hug and make this all better.



Me too.

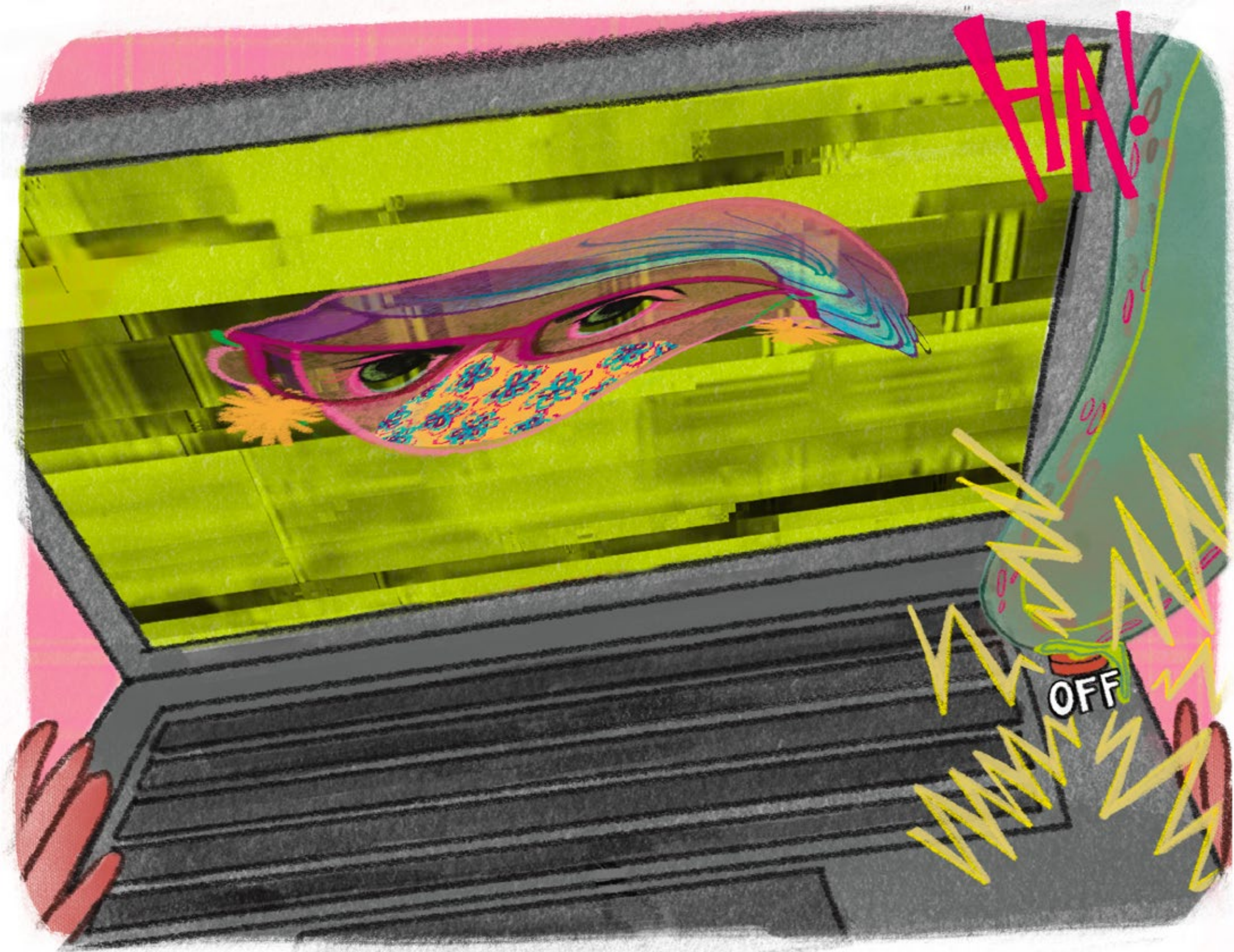
Me three.



OOO!  
I wonder what that button does?

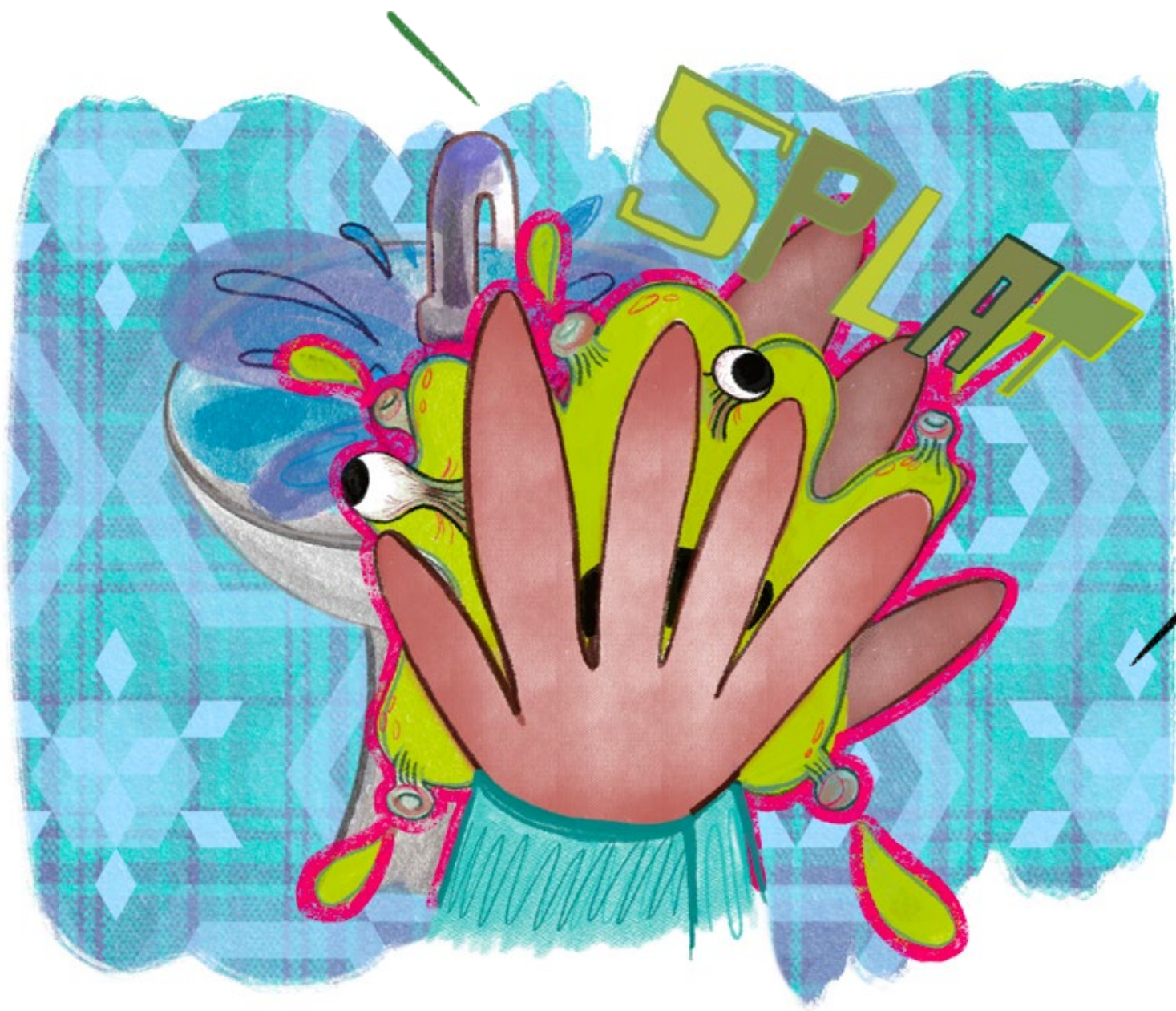
**NOOOOO!**







You're washing your hands again?!



YES  
I AM.

1, 2, 3,  
4, 5, 6,  
7, 8, 9, 10,

Don't forget your suitcase.



11, 12, 13, 14, 15,  
16, 17, 18, 19, 20!

Yaaaaasssss!

It worked!  
It really, really worked!

Now that he's gone,  
I've got time  
(not slime) on my hands!

Hey, I should  
make slime!  
I bet there's a  
recipe somewhere.

Oh! and I'm going to call  
Nana for her chocolate  
chip cookie recipe!

I hope we have  
enough chocolate chips.  
Those are essential!  
I can't wait to share them  
with my family and  
tell my class how I made them.

Oh, class!

I still need to figure out show and tell for  
tomorrow. Did you know that I can speak  
another language? Hola! Hamster and I have  
been practicing. Hamster is my guinea pig...



High Five!

Now go wash your hands.

The end.



## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

Dear Families,

We are sure that you have heard this before; but listen to us when we say, whatever you are feeling is totally valid. These are unprecedented times, and you might not know how to handle the questions your kid is asking, no matter how much information you have. This can feel very unsettling as a caregiver. It is natural to want to protect young children. However, while well intentioned, this might become a problem. Children often imagine something is scarier than it actually is. It's important to speak in clear, honest and concrete terms with children. We know it can be hard to explain a large topic like the coronavirus. We hope this book helps you facilitate a conversation with the children in your life. We want it to empower your children to feel a sense of control over how they can keep themselves and others safe and healthy.

Just remember, "A lot of us are feeling scared, but you're brave and it won't be this way forever. Nana's promise."

—Kyle Horne, Erin Shields, CCLS, and Nicole F. Albers, LMFT, ATR-BC

## EVEN SMALL KIDS HAVE BIG FEARS.

You may not have spoken with your child about the novel coronavirus, but they have likely overheard conversations or noticed changes in your home. Here is how you can talk to them:

- Ask open-ended questions such as "Tell me about how you're feeling" or "What do you know about coronavirus?"
- Let your children know that it is OK to have different feelings. They might feel confused, scared, upset, angry, overwhelmed, anxious, bored, etc.
- Give them reassurance and validation that everyone (kids and grown-ups) are having a tough time figuring things out; but they don't have to handle it alone.
- Help children identify trusted adults or peers who they can talk to when they are having a tough time. Figure out a way for them to connect with that person (a phone call, video call, or write a letter).
- Since germs cannot be seen on a child's hands or toys, it can be hard for them to understand why they must wash their hands multiple times a day. Give them prompts and reminders to wash Corny away down the drain.

## NANA'S WORDS OF WISDOM

“Nana” can bring children some reassurance and clarity. Here are a few pieces of “Nana’s Wisdom” to explore with your child:

- **Children may be more concerned about others than they are about themselves.** They may be worried about other caregivers who are working, older relatives or neighbors, or a sibling or friend with a medical condition. Validate their concern and develop a plan to connect.
  - **Most people who get sick will be able to rest, hydrate and recover at home.** But if someone needs to go to the hospital, the doctors and nurses take many precautions to keep them safe and take good care of them.
  - **If someone gets sick, it does not mean that the person is “bad” or did something wrong.** Again, children think differently than adults and might place the blame on themselves. It is important to clarify that they did not cause themselves (or someone else) to get sick.
  - **It is important that children don’t hide if they start to feel sick.** Children will often withhold information if they are afraid that they are going to get in trouble.
- Calmly talk with your children about how they are feeling and remind them that it is important for them to let you know if they feel sick.
- **We are always learning.** Kids ask a lot of questions. When it comes to COVID-19, we do not have all the answers. Be honest with them if you don’t know the answer and find a way to answer what you can in an age-appropriate way. Most of all, reassure them that they are safe, and you will figure it out together.
  - **Your child might not be able to tell you that they are stressed; but their behaviors will.** Children may become bossier, demanding, cranky, disrespectful or defiant when they are experiencing stress. Even a totally independent child might now seem clingier and more afraid of the dark. It’s important for adults to understand that these behavior changes are not because the child is being bad on purpose. It’s because the child is having big feelings and doesn’t know how to deal with them. Set an example and help them identify the feelings they might be having.

## QUARANTINE TIPS AND TRICKS

A sense of normalcy, along with boundaries set by caregivers, can provide children with a sense of security during a confusing time.

- **Set a schedule and stick to it.** This way children will know what to expect throughout the day. Remember to keep consistent with wakeup times, naps and bedtimes.
- **Identify creative or fun things for your child** to do with all this extra time (bake, write letters, dance party, art projects, make up stories, read books, karaoke, scavenger hunt, puppet show).
- **Think about how much screen time** is appropriate for your child’s age and set parameters. You may need to provide them with a countdown of how much time they have.
- **Promote playtime or a safe walk** around the neighborhood (with a grown-up).
- **Young children might not know how to count while washing their hands.** Use a song or rhyme to help prompt them to wash for 20 seconds.

“This book is a great way for adults to talk with kids about their experiences during a difficult time. A visit from Corny helps to identify different types of feelings children may be having, ways of staying connected and coping while staying home, and what the coronavirus is and how to stay safe. ‘Careless Corny’ does more than give information about the virus—it reminds children and adults that their feelings are normal, and that there are things they can do to feel better.”

—Karen C. Rogers, PhD  
*Clinical Psychologist, Children’s Hospital Los Angeles*

“As a health care executive and a nurse, I have experienced this pandemic from a medical and health care point of view. My son recently asked me ‘Mom, when will this be over?’ As a mom, I explained that I didn’t know. I said, ‘It might be a while.’ Our children have heard, seen and experienced this pandemic from their own point of view. This book can help check in with children, and get a sense of what they understand and what makes them anxious or afraid. It offers a great opportunity to empower them with comforting words, explanations and love.”

—Rhonda Foster, EdD, RN  
*Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Patient Care Services  
Children’s Hospital Los Angeles*



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